

Deterrence/950501 STRATCOM FOIA report

<http://www.nukestrat.com/us/stratcom/SAGessentials.PDF>

[Note: The report only has a 1995 date, so I've made it May 1 arbitrarily. I also ran OCR on it, which worked somewhat, so it's somewhat searchable. But I also found it at

<http://uscrisis.lege.net/doc/Essentials95.txt>

in text form and saved it here as that

Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Essentials_of_Post-Cold_War_Deterrence

says of this report:

"Essentials of Post-Cold War Deterrence" is a document produced in 1995 as a "Terms of Reference" by the Policy Subcommittee of the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) of the United States Strategic Command (current USSTRATCOM, former CINCSTRAT), a branch of the Department of Defense. The document, drafted under former Commander-in-Chief of CINCSTRAT Admiral Chiles, is to be used as a baseline for future policies and strategies in "expanding the Deterrence of the Use of Weapons of Mass Destruction." ... The article is notable ... for its explicit advocacy of ambiguity regarding "what is permitted" for [detering] other nations [than the USSR] and its endorsement of "irrationality", or more precisely, the perception thereof, as an important tool in deterrence and foreign policy.

The document claims that the capacity of the United States in exercising deterrence would be hurt by portraying U.S. leaders as fully rational and cool-headed, stating that "The fact that some elements may appear to be potentially 'out of control' can be beneficial to creating and reinforcing fears and doubts in the minds of an adversary's decision makers. This essential sense of fear is the working force of deterrence. That the U.S. may become irrational and vindictive if its vital interests are attacked should be part of the national persona we project to all adversaries."

==== begin excerpts from the document itself =====

We must be ambiguous about details of our response (or preemption) if what we value is threatened, but it must be clear that our actions would have terrible consequences for them. ...

We should have available the full range of responses – conventional weapons, special operations forces, and nuclear weapons, so that we can decide which to use based on the circumstances. ...

Without perceived national will and actual capability, none of the above steps work. An adversary must perceive that we have the national will to carry out responses. ...

The very framework of a concept that depends on instilling fear and uncertainty in the minds of opponents was never, nor can it be, strictly rational. ...

What should be sobering to all of us in viewing deterrence as a process is that its outcome was never, nor can it ever be, strictly predictable. ...

We must understand in advance, to the degree possible, what an adversary values. ... The story of the tactic applied by the Soviets during the earliest days of the Lebanon chaos is a case in point. When three of its citizens and their driver were kidnapped and killed, two days later the Soviets had delivered to the leader of the revolutionary activity a package containing a single testicle - that of his eldest son - with a message that said in no uncertain terms, "never bother our

people again." It was successful throughout the period of the conflicts there. Such an insightful tailoring of what is valued within a culture, and its weaving into a deterrence message, along with a projection of the capability that can be mustered, is the type of creative thinking that must go into deciding what to hold at risk ...

The first focus in achieving deterrence is to articulate the specific act or acts that we want to prevent. We must first make clear to ourselves, and then to a potential adversary, the level of value we place on certain people, assets, and territory (e.g. that which would be at risk in any attack against the US homeland). It must similarly be clear that what we seek to deter has such a direct and strong relationship to our most important national interests with few if any options but to carry through on our deterrent threat, that we can, and will act. [MH: Which means we need to be much more cautious in extending guarantees. Georgia is a good example. We either lose credibility (as we did there) or risk catastrophe.] ...

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While it is crucial to explicitly define and communicate the acts or damages that we would find unacceptable and, hence, what it is that we are specifically seeking to deter, we should not be very specific about our response. ... Thus, it is undesirable to adopt declaratory policies such as "no first use" which serve to specifically limit US nuclear deterrence goals without providing equitable returns. ...

[Deterrence] should ultimately create the fear of extinction -- extinction of either the adversary's leaders themselves or their national independence, or both. ... No single method can determine how best to induce terror in the mind of an adversary. ...

Because of the value that comes from the ambiguity of what the US may do to an adversary if the acts we seek to deter are carried out, it hurts to portray ourselves as too fully rational and cool-headed. The fact that some elements may appear to be potentially "out of control" can be beneficial to creating and reinforcing fears and doubts within the minds of an adversary's decision makers. This essential sense of fear is the working force of deterrence. That the US may become irrational and vindictive if its vital interests are attacked should be part of the national persona we project to all adversaries. [MH: But, if we pretend to be vindictive and irrational, there is danger that we will, in fact, act that way if our bluff is called. We then have to choose between losing all such power in future confrontations or following through on our bluff.] ...

deterrence through the threat of use of nuclear weapons will continue to be our top military strategy. ...

we would consider the complete elimination of our nuclear weapons only in the context of complete and general disarmament. Thus ... nuclear weapons seem destined to be the centerpiece of US strategic deterrence for the foreseeable future.